

This outline is submitted by the UK charity Speakers for Schools for an indication of forthcoming written evidence. It is a draft and not for publication.

Written evidence submitted by: Speakers for Schools to the Youth Select Committee Inquire on Barriers to Work Experience.

Executive Summary

- Speakers for Schools, specialising in improving access to leading UK figures for state schools, expanded their free programme to include work experience in response to seeing a noticeable rise in this activity following their events, leading to creation of S4SNextGen.org (S4SNextGen).
- S4SNextGen was initially launched as a safe-guarded portal, but after consultation and pilot it soon became evident businesses needed extra encouragement and industry guidance to offer placements.
- Consultation, delivery and feedback has also uncovered the lack of provision for work experience before students make major education decisions.
- Employer feedback has noted the lack of 'diversity'¹ at graduate, apprentice and wider industry levels and they have expressed a desire to encourage more young people into their industry.
- Targeting higher-need students, without personal industry links and other qualifiers, has been a defining feature of the programme and one that employers desire in their programme delivery.
- Through surveys and delivery, it has been evident that both parties struggle with understanding of requirements and processes on safeguarding and health & safety, with these becoming *barriers* for some to engage. Assistance in simplifying, signposting and facilitating these has helped make placements more possible.

¹ 'Diversity' is used in this document in the broadest sense including but not limited to ethnic minority statuses, physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, SEN and more.

Introduction

Speakers for Schools is a charity that operates across the UK to help level the playing field for all young people at state schools and colleges by offering them the opportunity to engage with the leading figures and organisations that are shaping the UK and the world around them, free of charge. Meant to replicate the public (fee-paying) school model of stimulating school talks and engagement with top figures, the charity has delivered over 4,800 school talks since its 2011 launch and now has extended its programmes to work experience, having organised over 525 placements at industry-leading organisations since launching in 2017.

Before facilitating, already 33%² of our schools and speakers reported they attempted to organise post-talk placements and workplace visits, leading to further investigation into how our charity should responsibly help our stakeholders better connect over such opportunities and even encourage them to come into fruition. This led to the pilot of (2016) and launch (2017) of “S4SNextGen”, requiring the charity to better understand the specific gap it could fill with our unique network of influential figures, and often under-resourced state schools.

Our response to applicable questions presented by the Committee are as follows:

Please note – this is a draft outline and we will be providing further detail and key points from our placement feedback in the final submission.

1. Programme Remit and Delivery (function we provide)

- 1.1. Connecting employers and schools
- 1.2. Focus on facilitation and support
- 1.3. Identifying students lacking access
- 1.4. Launching S4SNextGen

2. Overcoming barriers to enable Work Experience

- 2.1. Making it a delivery priority within the existing workload of a business
- 2.2. Making it strategic
- 2.3. Flexible models and examples of how to host students
- 2.4. Employers have wide ranging-experience levels and support needs combine with the above factors
 - 2.4.1. Employers with no experience of hosting
 - 2.4.2. Employers looking to centralise and organise their placements
 - 2.4.3. Employers looking to widen their reach

3. Targeting Students

- 3.1. Identifying students that lack access to Work Experience:
- 3.2. Supporting students by giving a ‘leg-up’
- 3.3. Helping employers interpret “Student Need”

² Based on responses to Speakers for Schools bi-annual Impact Monitoring Form

4. Benefit of hosting students earlier on in their educational career

- 4.1. Benefit of experience before making key education pathway decisions
- 4.2. Employers anecdotally noting their diversity challenges at graduate level
- 4.3. Schools less likely to offer Work Experience at younger ages and rely on connections

5. What is “Good Quality Work Experience?”

- 5.1. Informed by successful, experience programmes and feedback
- 5.2. Senior inspiration
- 5.3. Pathways in
- 5.4. Building transferable skills
- 5.5. Expectation setting moments
- 5.6. Reflection points
- 5.7. A challenge at the end (e.g. presentation).

6. What value does S4SNextGen add?

- 6.1. Centralised application and administration process
- 6.2. Finding programme models and solutions to make hosting feasible for businesses
- 6.3. Team support for employers to help reduce administration and troubleshooting
- 6.4. Opportunity to advertise alongside other leading brands to increase awareness
- 6.5. Assisting schools by offering access to multiple, diverse opportunities.
- 6.6. Assisting schools with administration and organisation support
- 6.7. Accessing and encouraging ‘nomination’ of high-need students
- 6.8. Acting as a middle man in interpreting schools’ and employers’ objectives

Appendix 1: Case Study – M&G Investments

INDUSTRY: Finance

AGES: 14-15

MODEL TYPE: 1-week team shadowing including workshops

SPECIAL FEATURES: '+1 Hosting Scheme' to enable hosting big groups of students

Why is it important for us to make this work?:

- Looking for a less ad-hoc solution for work experience as we have well-established graduate and apprentice programmes
- Keen to reach students earlier to help encourage a broader range into the industry.
- This gives an opportunity to demystify the financial industry and what it is that investment companies do.
- How do we make it work: '+1 Hosting Scheme': "We get many requests from employees for friends and family to come in for work experience. To continue to push our social mobility focus we've set up a '+1 Hosting Scheme' whereby if an employee wants to host friends or family they must also commit to hosting a student through S4SNextGen. This has worked really well and has hugely increased our potential hosting capacity."

What did it look like? Activities that students take part in include:

- Spending time with various departments to understand all the work that goes on inside an investment company and how teams support each other.
- Sitting in on meetings and showing the importance of preparation and business-etiquette.
- Showing students first-hand how our HR team shortlist candidates for hiring, thus giving them an insight which will be of use to them.
- Learning about the different software we use and why this is important
- CV/Interview & skills workshops
- A 'meet the apprentices' insight evening or lunch
- A short meeting with the CEO, who is also an S4S speaker.
- Finally, preparing and presenting on what they had learnt in the week, what they will take away and what their next steps are as a result.

Unique characteristics:

- We don't set academic requirements for students who apply but instead look for enthusiasm
- We also created a robust programme for the students that utilised our various team members (including graduates and apprentices).
- Highlights: "Seeing the students improve in confidence throughout the week, listening to their final presentations and reading in their feedback forms how they are seriously thinking of their career options for the future."

Top tip: "By hosting a large group of students we were able to set up a number of worthwhile activities and workshops that it made it worth the time for both students and staff who were organising these opportunities."

Speakers for School Submission to the Youth Select Committee 2018
Outline of Written Evidence on barriers to Work Experience

Student Quotes:

“It definitely gave me a different perspective and it showed me that to be successful, you don’t always need to do a degree for the title, sometimes experience is more valuable.”

“I think that work experience is incredibly important for students. It's the time where you're able to meet brand new people in a professional environment to experience what work life is like.”

Appendix 2: Case Study – Fandom

INDUSTRY: Entertainment

AGES: 16-18

MODEL TYPE: Rotational

SPECIAL FEATURES: Very small team hosting for the first time

Why is it important for us to make this work?:

- “It’s important for us as a company to give something back to society and show students how our business works on a daily basis. We also have a relationship with Speakers for Schools as our founder, Jimmy Wales, is a speaker.”

How do we make it work:

- Small, busy office so helpful to have buy-in from our founder Jimmy Wales to get the program off the ground.
- Chose relatively quiet weeks
- What did it look like?: Busy schedule with students spending each day in a different department. E.g. Monday was with HR focusing on careers and life skills, Tuesday in the Community team, Wednesday with Sales, Thursday with the Editorial team and Friday with advertising.
- Each day would consist of an introduction to the department in the morning followed by a practical assignment in the afternoon (e.g. reviewing CVs, participating in a sales meeting, putting together a proposal, writing an editorial piece, reviewing a focus group). Hosting more than one student meant that rather than increasing the workload it took the pressure off as they could work together.

Unique Characteristics:

- Matching activities to students’ skills sets. E.g. Creative students writing editorial pieces and publishing on the website: “I think this was really important to be able to let them do something ‘real’ and let them see the results and the finished article online.”

Highlights:

- “This is the first year we are hosting and we were very surprised at how bright and eager to learn the students were. To be honest it was an amazing experience all round.”

Student quotes:

“The friendly ambience and team made the experience much better – work didn’t feel like a burden, but more of an exciting challenge.”

“I’ve learnt that there are many careers that I didn’t know about and I might enjoy.”